

THE DANCE AT
JOE CHEVALIER
AND OTHER POEMS



BY WILMOT A. KETCHAM

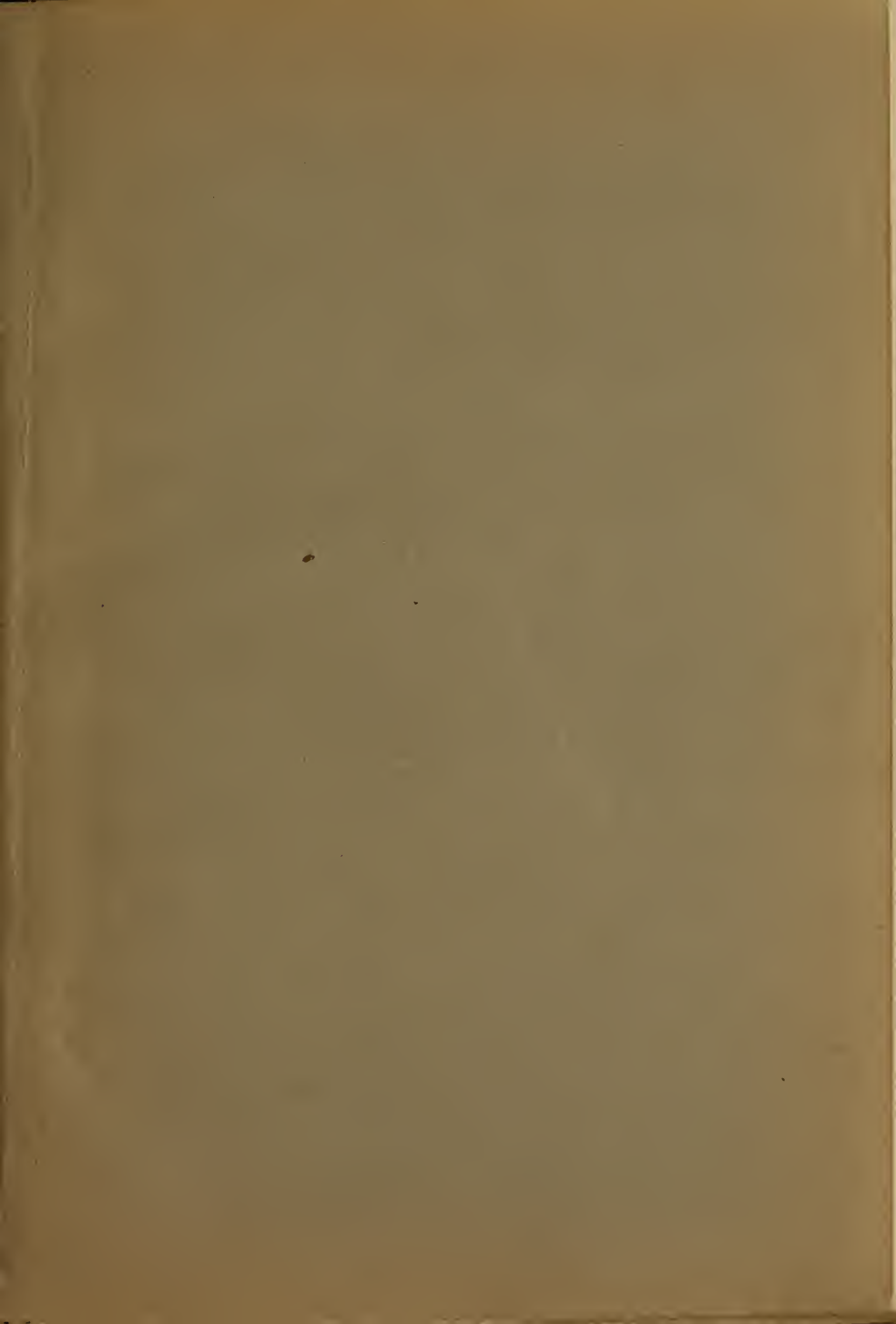


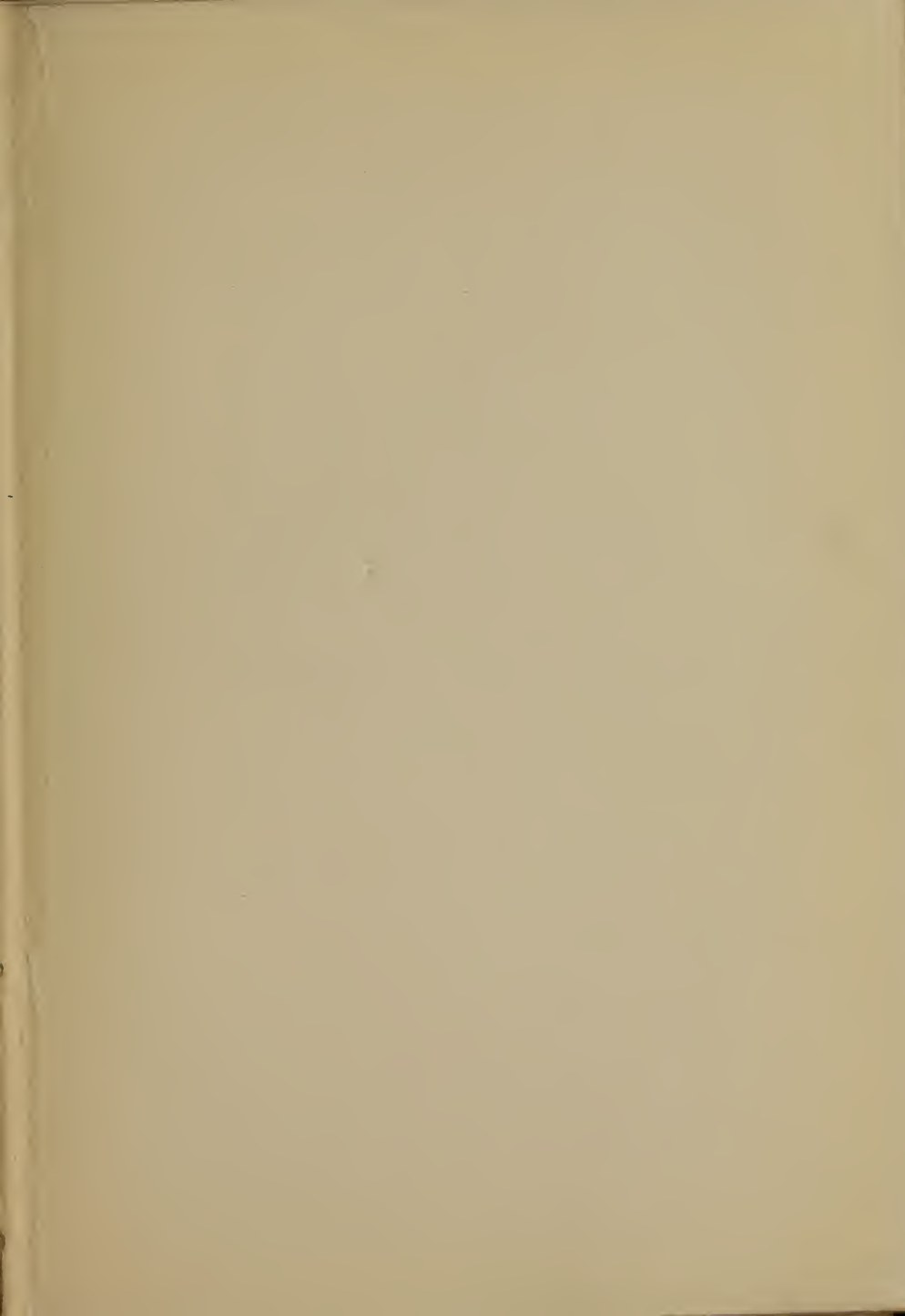
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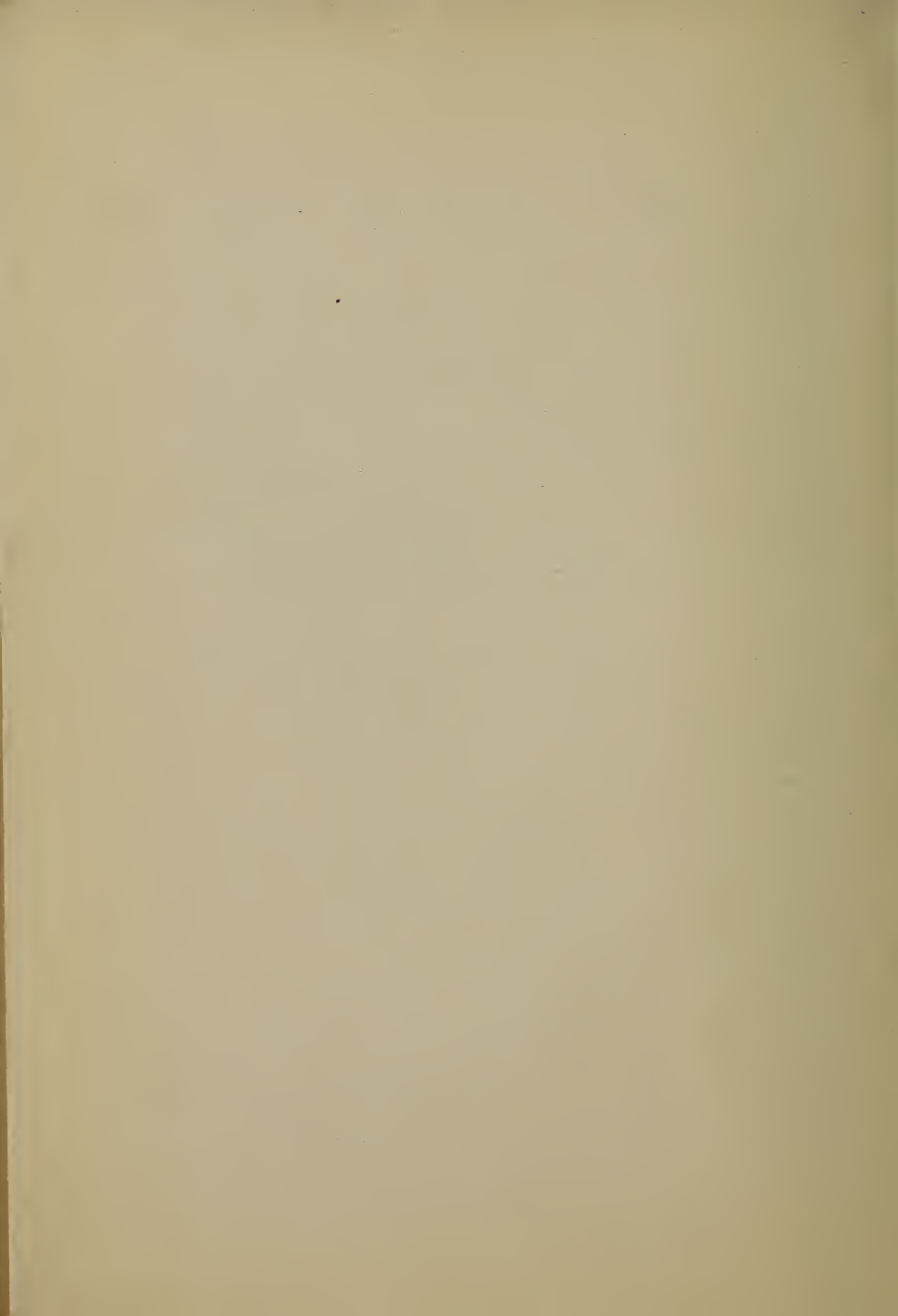
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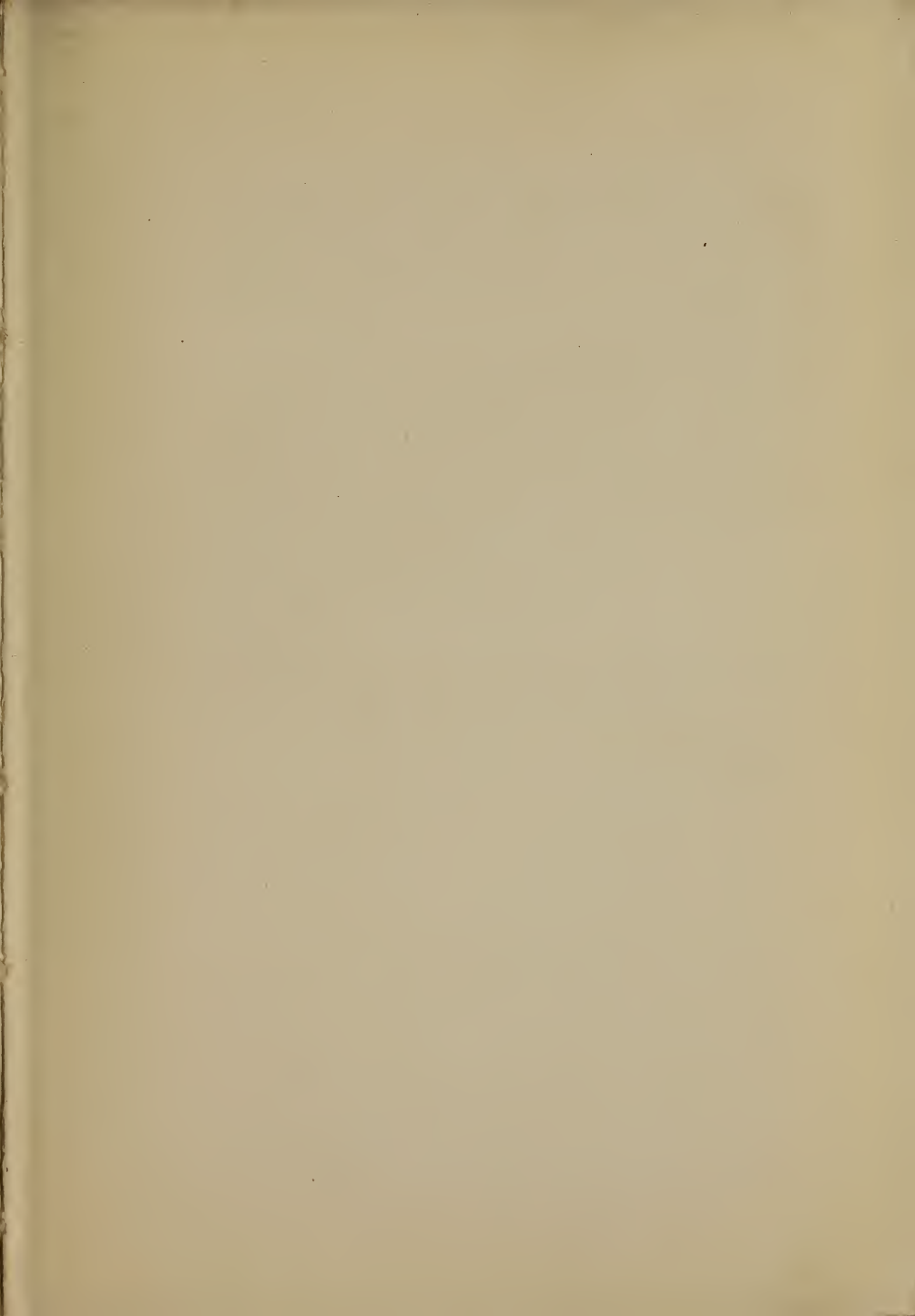
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THE FRANKLIN, TOLEDO

THE DANCE AT JOE CHEVALIER

AND OTHER POEMS

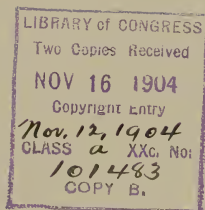
BY
WILMOT A. KETCHAM

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
THE TOLEDO TILE CLUB

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TOLEDO, OHIO
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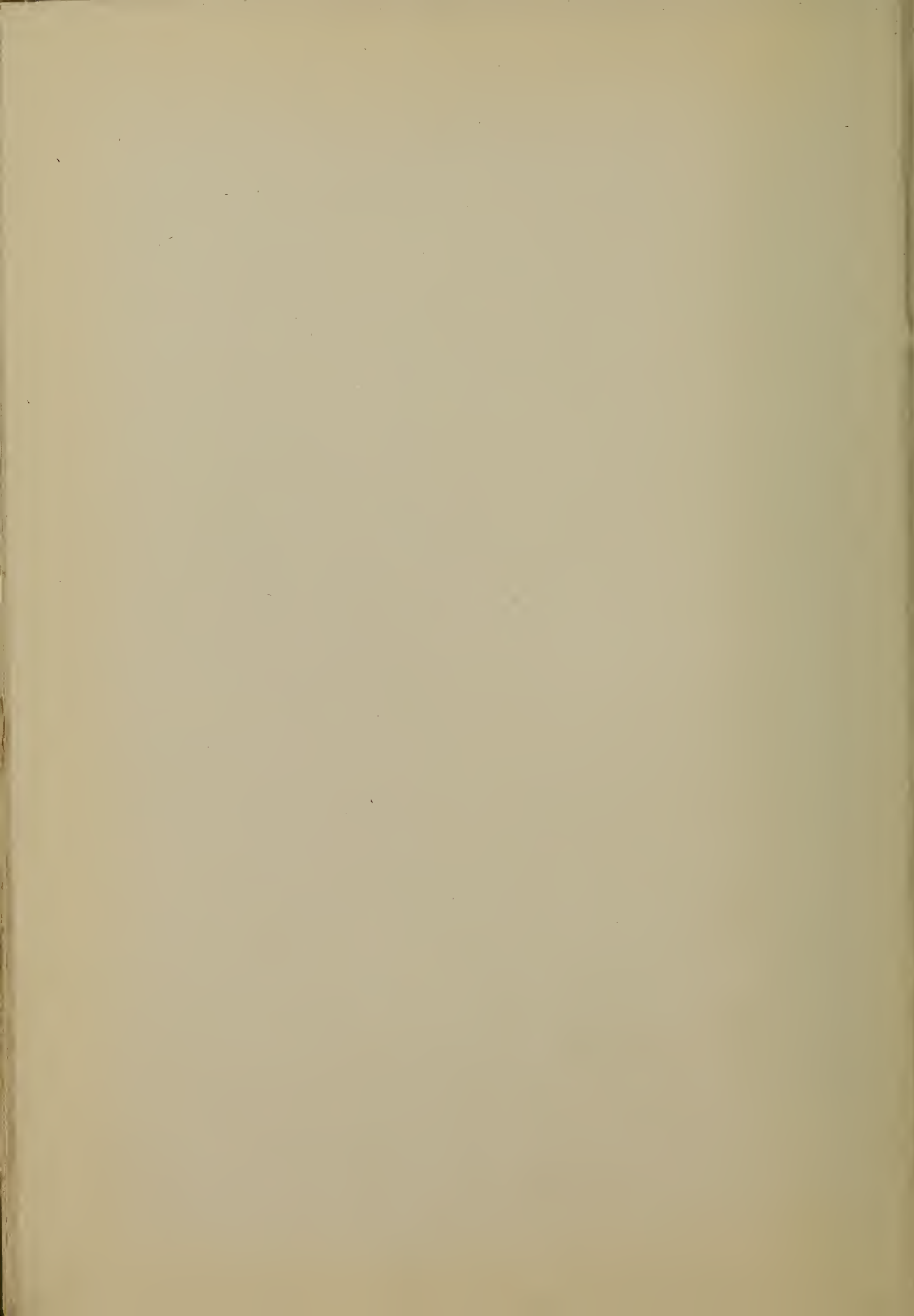


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By Way of Prelude

YOU will remember how Millett, in his great painting, "The Angelus", took two dull, insensate clods of the field and furrow, and made them infinitely pathetic. A man and a woman with bowed heads—that was all. And yet—do you recall the hush of reverence that fell upon you, and the sudden dryness that gripped your throat when you looked at those two unlovely figures?

It is God's own gift, this genius for uncovering beautiful truths in soil that seems hopelessly barren; and the poet possesses it in the superlative degree. To the true poet it matters little what language is spoken by his subject. You and I see merely the husk of a man—the poet shows us the heart inside the husk. He is the great interpreter who makes intelligible things which are uttered in strange tongues—as much a prophet as Jeremiah of old. He is voice for the dumb; he speaks the universal language of the soul.

Perhaps we who know him, are over-fond of the quaint, ingenuous habitant with whom Mr. Ketcham has fraternized so delightfully and profitably in the marsh-lands of Ohio and Michigan, but we cannot help believing that even if he comes to you as a stranger, you must learn to love this wayward son of France.

For French he is—indubitably French, in spite of many filtrations of the old hot blood, in spite of Indian strain, corrupting environment, and a lacerated language which is neither flesh, fish, nor good red herring.

Yes, he is French; but, first and foremost, an elemental child of Old Mother Earth—with passions fresh poured from her crucible, and, under his stolid exterior, emotions as naive and untutored as though the sweep and flow of civilization had never touched even the outskirts of his cabin home.

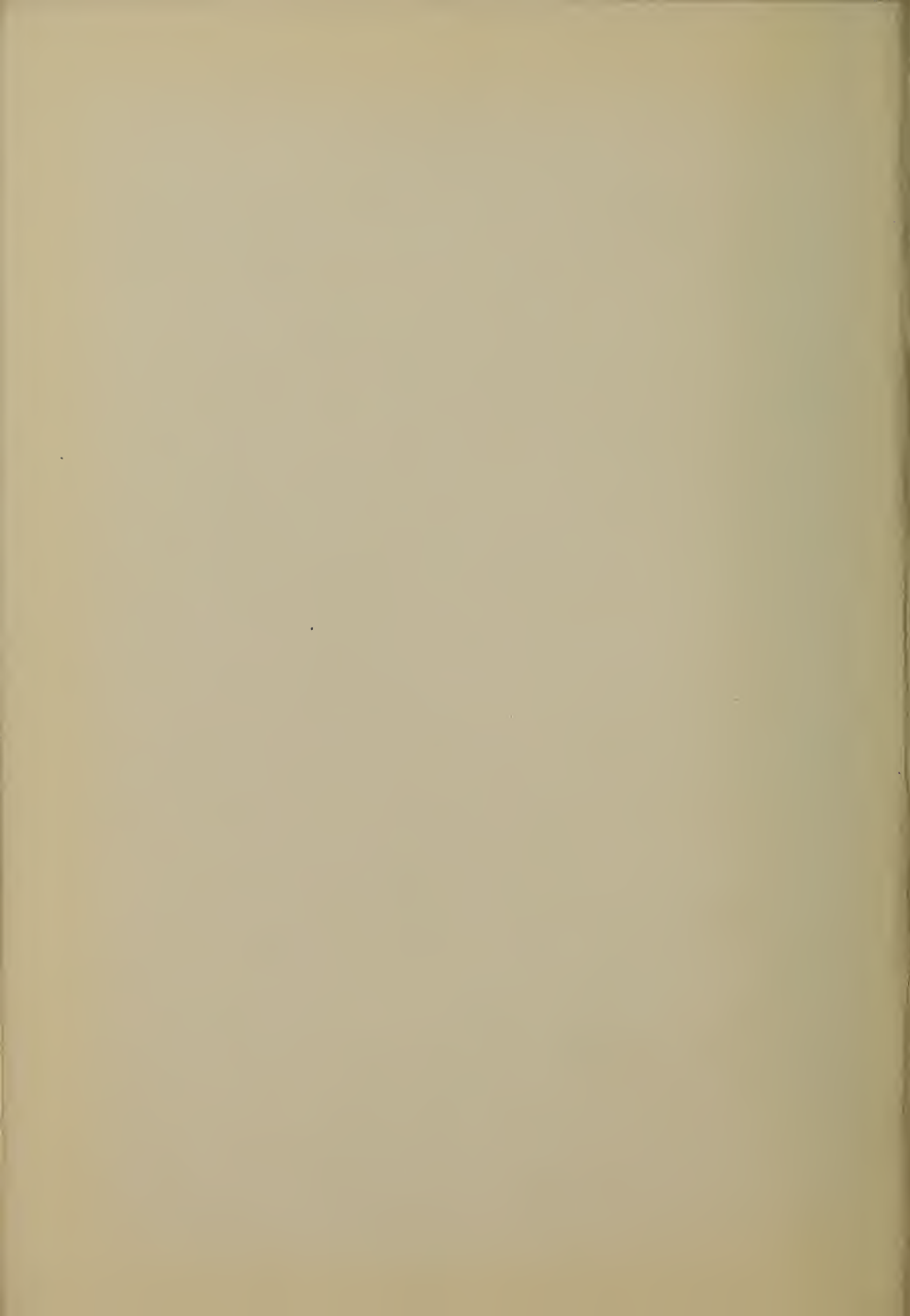
You'll hear the soft, unctuous plash of paddles in this book, and the whizz and whirr of winged things; the ooze of swamp-land under crunching boots, the crack of the rifle, and the thrilling cry of dogs in hot pursuit. But better still, you'll feel the impact of life as it is lived in the marsh-lands—a crude, bizarre, and sometimes ugly sort of life; but, when you break through the crust, very closely akin in its tragedies and comedies to existence as we know it in the city.

*"The Colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady
Are sisters under their skins."*

So sings Kipling, and true it is, too, of these quaint cousins of ours whose lives Mr. Ketcham has illuminated so vividly. They constitute a steadily narrowing little corner of Creation, and the day of disappearance is not, perhaps, far distant. So it is well that Mr. Ketcham, with his quick comprehension, has found time to break bread with them—and time to gather us all about the fireside while the story is being told. It is a story that brooks no delay in the hearing, if you love life for life's sake, so—pull up your chair a little closer to the blaze, and listen:

Theodore F. MacManus.

The Dance at Joe Chevalier.





The Dance at Joe Chevalier.

DAT ol pirogue, she's loaded strong,
Petit Pierre he start de song
He lern on de big river.
Tout ensemble—dip, dip—
Dose paddle dip lak swallow's wing.
De moon is up to hear us sing,
Geese is callin, night is fallin;
Hear dose paddle dip, dip—
We'll dance at Joe Chevalier.

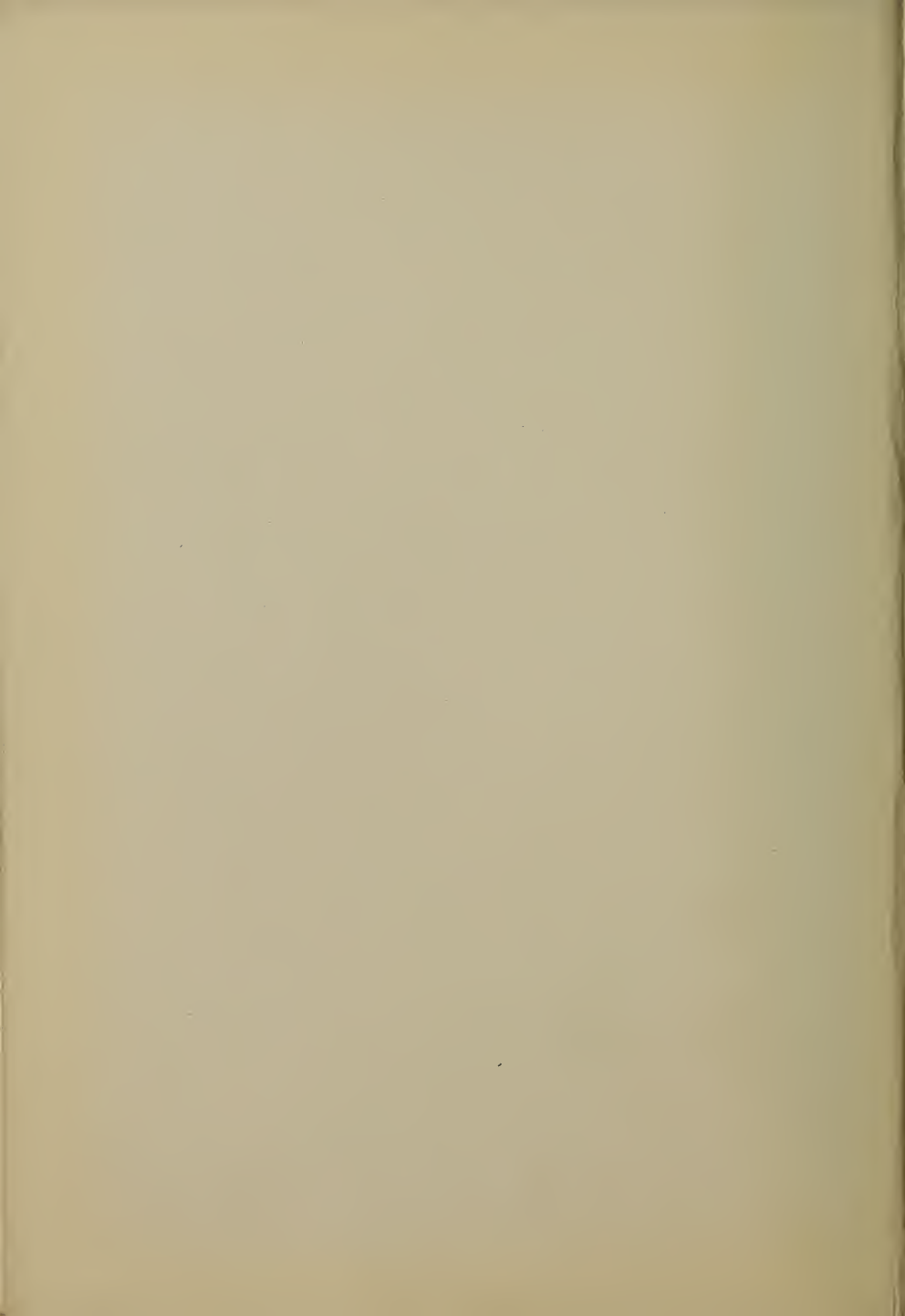
The Dance at Joe Chevalier.

De fur is sol, de jug is fill,
A Frenchman can drink whiskey till
De jug she's noding in it.
Eau de vie—drink! drink!—
She's warm de heart an swell de head,
She's fedders now, to-morrow lead.
Dat's cold wedder, try some fedder;
Kiss de hol jug—drink! drink!—
We'll dance at Joe Chevalier.

Hol Pete, she's steerin by a star,
We'll see Joe's light out on de bar
If she ain't steer by fire-fly.
Nom de Dieu—sure, sure!—
De light is shinin bright an clear,
Hol Joe he know dat we be here;
Don stop to res, paddle you bes.
Nom de Dieu—sure, sure!—
We'll dance at Joe Chevalier.

Voila! look, dose girl is here,
Pete's squaw, she's jumpin lak a deer;





The Dance at Joe Chevalier.

Deres Victorine an Julie.
Strike me dead—hi! hi!—
“La femme,” dat fill de trinitee,
La chanson an dat good whiskee,
Big Honorine, tit Sidonie.
Strike me dead—hi! hi!—
We’ll dance at Joe Chevalier.

Hark to dat fiddle what she say:
“Dance, you goin die some day,”
Now is de time for livin.
Mark de time—dance, dance!—
Jaques Noir an ma belle Sidonie,
Dey dance lak “La chasse galerie;”
Nex time you see, she dance wid me.
Mark de time—dance, dance!—
We’ll dance at Joe Chevalier.

Dat rain she’s drip, an den she’s dash,
De win is moanin on de mash,
Ma po’vr petite Sidonie.
Misererre—ai, ai—

The Dance at Joe Chevalier.

Wid de blue mark on hes back,
In hes dug-out, poor hol Jaques.
Misererre—ai, ai—
We danced at Joe Chevalier.





De Spring Call of de Loon.

LAS spring, I am down on de mash,
An de souwes win was blow,
An de voices out in de moonlight
Was singin sof an low.

De raindrops patter gently,
An I tink I am gettin hol,
An I go to de door an lissen,
An de win blow warm, den cold.

De Spring Call of de Loon.

An de mallards, dey was callin,
An de widgeon whistle, too,
Do de soun is hol lak de mash,
In de Spring dey is always new.

An den I go back to de fire,
An am halmos go to sleep,
When a soun come over de mash
Dat mek my pulses leap.

I jomp to my feet an lissen,
Wid de echo in my ear,
For dat was a soun I did'n hear
For more dan forty year.

An den I hear dat call again,
Out under de quiet moon,
An it ring true as my mudder's voice;
De Spring call of de loon.

Dat's why I know dat call's for me,
An I ans'er, loud an clear:



De Spring Call of de Loon.

"I'm comin, my God, I'm comin!"
Lak I honly had twenty year.

An quick as de dive of de mushrat,
I'm on de ol trail once more,
Jes out of our camp on Cedar Lac,
In de Spring time of forty-four.

Dey was me an Gabrielle Bonvouloir,
We are loaded down wid fur,
He is mon bon camerade
An a firs-rate voyageur.

An de pines dey was singing dere chanson,
An dat seem good to me;
An de lacs is strung on de river
Lak de beads on my rosarie.

Deres de Lac of Pine, an Burnt Lac,
White Trout, an de Otter Slide,
Jeff's Lac, an de two Joe Lac,
Jes layin side by side.

De Spring Call of de Loon.

But de bes of all is Canoe Lac,
Asleep in her robe of mis,
An over de dark of de pines
By de Nordern Light is kiss.

But we did'n stop at Canoe Lac,
We was fill wid de Spring an de night;
An soon we're on de river,
In an out of de sof moonlight.

An we was singin "La Jeune Sophie,"
Jes loud lak we could crack,
An de pines on each side de river,
Dey was doubly pay us back.

But above de soun of de singin,
Is de roar of "Whiskee Fall,"
An jes when I firs hear it,
I hear, too, de loon's Spring call.

An when Gabe say, "Les run her,"
My heart was almos stop;

De Spring Call of de Loon.

De wors fall on de river,
Long rapide, an six feet drop!

But we don swing in to de portage,
An we go right straight ahead
Where de white devil dance in de moonlight,
Over de rocky bed.

Den de hiss an boil of de water—
A crash—a white face—a moan;
An down at de foot of de rapide
I'm dazed, an safe, but alone.

Alone at de foot of de rapide—
My God—alone wid de moon;
An mournful, from out of de shadow,
Comes de Spring call of de loon.



Since Marie Die.

DAT win, she's blowin up a rain,
De drops come on my window-pane.
Dat win, she's got a lonely sigh;
Dat's jes one year since Marie die.

My fire she's burnin way down low,
De flame she come, an den she go.

Since Marie Die.

Dem twilight shadows comin by;
Dat's jes one year since Marie die.

De hice she crack up on de creek;
Was early March wen she get sick.
De sea-gull jes beggin to fly;
Dat's jes one year since Marie die.

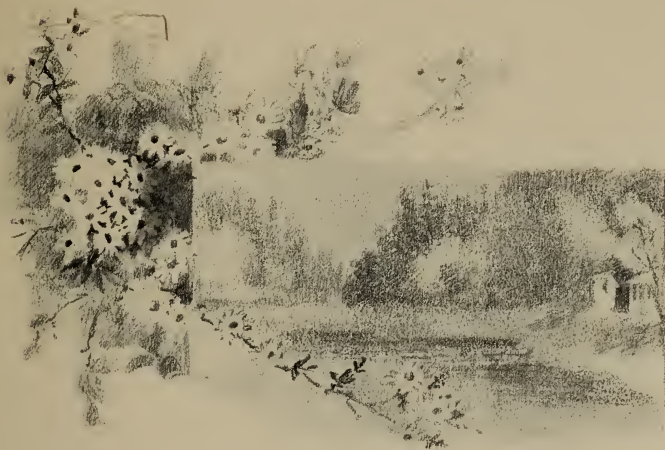
I bring her here five year last May,
We sail across La Plaisance Bay,
An for ol Julie's milk she cry;
Dat's jes one year since Marie die.

Where Pelau Creek she meet de lac,
We watch dat silver pickrel wak,
She look at me, her dark brown eye;
Dat's jes one year since Marie die.

I lay las night an tink some more,
I hear dem surf beat on dat shore,
I feel dat tear come in my eye;
Dat's jes one year since Marie die.

Since Marie D. *1900-1910*

I get me noder pup next Spring,
I train her hunt lak anyting.
I no can match her if I try;
Dat's jes one year since Marie die.



Dat Pokaire Game.

I HAD some pretty dandee time
In de Spring time an de Fall,
But de time we lern dat pokaire game
Was de dandee time of all.

Dey was me, an dat ol Pete La Pere,
Was comin from Monroe;

Dat Pokaire Ga

(Ol Pete he only got one ear,
Count of dat fight wid Joe).

Dat ol pon boat was sailin free,
An I was hol de stick,
Wen dat ol Pete he seen a light
On dat island call Wood Tick.

Ol Pete he say, "Some hunter dere,"
An he wink a gret big wink;
He say, "Jim, go up troo Deep Cut,
Mebbe we get a drink."

I run dat pon boat troo dat Cut,
Pete trow de hank, an shout:
"Youse feller, dere, were tirsty here,
So our tong is hangin out."

Bime-by dose feller dey come out;
Dey come out awful slow.
Said dat dey came to shoot dose duck;
Dey come from Toledo.

Dat Pokaire Game.

Den one dose dude, he say to us:

"Boys, you had good long sail,"

An, "Jack, you better mix em up

A good, strong cock-a-tail."

Now, me an Pete, like good Frenchman,

We drink our whiskee clear;

We didn't lak dat name cock-a-tail,

Tought mebbe it was beer.

Dat feller, Jack, he bring us both

A tumbler full up clear;

Dat low-lived Pete, he drink his down

An never shed a tear.

Bime-by me an one-ear Pete,

We feel lak two brass ban.

"We play pokaire," one feller say,

"Boys, come and tek a han."

Now, me an Pete, we play pedro,

An High, Jack, Low, de Game,

Dat Pokaire Game.

We never play dat game, pokaire,
But we try her, jes de same.

Dey show us den dat "flush-tail-bob,"
Dat "triple" an dat "fill."
"De fill is bes," says one-ear Pete,
I couldn't keep him still.

Den me an Pete, we tink we see
Jes how dat game she run,
We win two dollar sixty-five
An tought dat game was fun.

But pretty soon, bime-by, somehow
Dat luck begin to turn,
We see dere was things bout dat game
Dat we forgot to lern.

Pete, he lose haf dat load of feesh,
An me—I lose haf, too—
We lose dat boat-hook, an dat hank—
Dat hank, she was bran new.

Dat Pokaire Game.

But jes bout dat time, dat Pete
He say, "Give me two card."
I see tree aces in his hand—
My bret was comin hard.

I draw four card widout a smile,
An get dat oder ace.
I put dat ace on Pete's knee—
He never change hes face.

I say I tought I wouldn't bet,
An trow my han away;
An Pete, he say, "Jes wait a bit,
I tink I got a say."

He say, "I bet dat ol pon boat
Wid dat dere feller Jack,
Agin dose gun." "A go," Jack say,
"Dat boat will tek us back."

Jack had four king, but Pete four ace.
Pete Jump to dat gun-rack—

Dat Pokaire Game.

He grab a gun an say, "Look here,
You feller jes stan back."

An den I grab dat oder gun,
An me an Pete sail off.
Dose feller laf jes lil laf—lak
Dey had a good bad cough.

I had some pretty dandee time
In de Spring time an de Fall,
But de time we lern dat pokaire game,
She was de bes of all.



A Muskrat Hunter's Lament.

DE mash she's cover up wid hice,
Dat mushrat house she's high four feet.
He mek dat high, an warm, an nice,
To keep hes bed an wat he heat.

De norwes win fill up wid snow,
She blow, blow, blow, an don feel good;
An my steel trap freeze two feet low,
I lak to get dem if I could.

I got bad luck since las July,
I los feesh-net, bout ninety yard;
My hoats was hall heat up by fly,
An ev'ry time she come dam hard.



A Muskrat Hunter's Lament.

De rock, she stove my feesh-boat in,
My chicks hall die wid lice;
An for two week my rat-trap bin
Freeze two feet deep in hice.

I spen six dollar for new clothes,
An den I go get drunk.
In Dominic's barn I freeze my nose—
My suit get spoil by skunk.

My wife, he lose two lil chaps,
Course dat ain't ver nice;
But more dan dat, my new steel trap
Freeze two feet deep in hice.



Canadian Sketches.

THE fire had burned rather low and the talk had sunk with it.

The glow of the embers showed the various figures around the fire, and among them, stretched at full length, puffing lazily at his short pipe and gazing thoughtfully in the fire, that of Placide Carabou, the half-breed guide.

His position showed his wiry form to good advantage and made a very picturesque figure in the half light. Black hair, stubby black beard, dark eyes and swarthy face, loose woolen shirt open at the neck, showing the brawny, hairy chest. The remainder of his dress, overalls and buckskin moccasins. His heavy brown eyes gave

Canadian Sketches.

him a half-scowling, half-fierce look, as he gazed in the fire, but there was a kindly twinkle in his dark eyes which indicated that his first name was not such a misnomer after all.

The group around the fire was silent and thoughtful in that vast cathedral of which the giant pines were the columns, and the wind in the tree tops the organ which played as grand and as lofty strains as ever swept down the aisles of a cathedral built by hands.

The silence was unbroken except the ever-present forest lullaby in the tree tops, until a loon screamed in some far-off lake, and following it came the long-drawn howl of a wolf. The spell was broken. Some one tossed an armful of cedar on the fire and the flame shot up, lighting the somber pines and making the boughs of a balsm crackle over head. Placide slowly took his pipe from his mouth and said: "Dat wolf fin where we kill doe—dey have lil picnic to-night."

Canadian Sketches.

Then the talk turned on the doe, and the slayer, a quiet fellow enough, not given to sentiment, said: "I never felt so much like a murderer as when I plunged that knife in the doe's throat; such an appealing look out of her great, soft eyes. I couldn't do it again."

The "Old Hunter" broke in: "Yes, she looked at you like Laurence Sternes' donkey, 'Do not slay me; but if you will you may.' I notice, though, that your appetite didn't hang fire when it came to ribs of venison. It's all weak sentimentality; your next will be easier."

The first speaker said: "I am thankful I am not as much of a barbarian as you are—the feeling is a natural one and I'll warrant even Placide has felt it sometimes, haven't you? you old wolf."

The half-breed looked up with a quiet smile and said: "Yes, I feel lak dat once; I tell you bout it. I was camp den on de 'Mab de Feau' (brief for Amable de Feau),

Canadian Sketches.

an it was long in de Spring, but de snow was deep lak four feet an de crus on. Dat's hard on deer, dat crus; dey brek troo, an de wolf kill dem lak a dog kill sheep. I was comin to camp, after de moon come up, over de crus. I didn't feel pretty good; a lynx got a big beaver from my trap, an I ketch four jay-bird in my mink trap. Wen I was comin troo lil hard-wood bush, I start a doe. She went two jump, den she is ketch in de crus. I got up wid my knife to cut her troat, an den wen I am goin raise her to cut, she look at me lak dat what you say. Me—I drop my knife an den I pick her up an say: 'Placide, you are a fool—fool—dat's good hide on dat doe.' Den I tek my knife again, but she look again an den I see she is near to have some fawn, an den I know what dat look from her eye is lak, mais—lak my wife wen our firs baby is born. De good God sent dat look so I can remember (softly and crossing himself) my wife;

Canadian Sketches.

she die. I help dat doe to dat runway, an lead her lak a sheep. I tek her to my camp an nex mornin she have two pretty fawn. My dogs get used to her an dey won touch her or dose fawn, and dey won tek her track. No.

“One day, I hear some strange dog, long way off, comin to my camp. I go to camp; I tink mebbe dat’s my doe, an bime-by I see her comin right for me. She come in de house an jomp on my bunk an lay down an pant, pant. She have long run an she look at me again lak wen I firs saw her. I trow my blanket over her an den shut de door an watch for dem dog. In bout five minute dey come up, an hol dat trail up to my door, an den dey look foolish—dey try to fin dat trail again, but dey soon fin she is inside, and den I let dem dog fin out dey run de wrong deer. Dat winter bot dose fawn get kill by wolf, but dat ol doe she always come to my camp, an she never mek mistek to trus me. But

Canadian Sketches.

she get kill dat Summer—funny, dat was (with a sly glance at the Old Hunter). One dem ol hunter from de State tink she is wil an shoot her in my potato-patch wid forty-eight buck-shot. He was foolish; he could kill her wid one."





A Christmas Story.

IT was a genial, typical Christmas day, that of 1801; the sun shone benignantly and a curious group looked out across the Maumee Bay from the shore at Presque Isle.

Several French voyageurs, careless, happy and voluble. A group of Indians, silent and watchful. Two American hunters, alert, rifle on arm and with an occasional glance at the priming. A couple of English traders, reckless dare-devils, but resourceful.

They had stood thus for an hour, watching across the snow for Father Placide, from Frenchtown (Monroe).

At last, from one of the Frenchmen:

A Christmas Story.

"Voila! de good Fader." A contemptuous grunt from one of the Indians: "See him long time."

A little speck, far across the Bay at first, but soon the sturdy little Canadian pony, bursting breast high through the drifts—and Father Placide has arrived. Patting the pony and calling him "Mon Brave," while willing hands unhitched him, he greets each one. "Ah, Francois, thy wife needs thee at Detroit; to-morrow thou shalt go." To another, shaking a warning finger, "And thou, Antoine, I have not seen thee since thy babies' christening; then thou wert drunk. Thou hast much for which to be forgiven." Both looked sheepish.

"A happy Noel to you all, my children," but as he saw the slinking figure of a half-breed in the back ground—"Nay, not to thee. Go to thy cabin, thou shalt go back with me and see the widow and fatherless little ones thy murderous knife hath made." To the Indians: "If he steps outside his

A Christmas Story.

door, shoot him." To the English-speaking portion of his audience, in a sweet French accent: "Gentlemen, will you have the politeness to join our worship; Christmas Day belongs to all of us." He led the way to the largest cabin, soon set up his little altar, with its beautiful silver crucifix, and began the celebration of mass.

The solemn, beautiful service needed no deep-toned organ; the sturdy winter wind took up the theme, and the responses came from the stately elms. As he raised the host and looked up to the smoky rafters with a rapt look, one could see that one eye was sightless (a blazing splinter from an Iroquois fire), that three of his fingers were missing, lost years before at the torture—but there was undaunted strength in the thin old face and resolution in the grasp of the remaining fingers.

The solemn hush that fell on the company (except for a sob or two) after the mass, was broken by the Father: "My

A Christmas Story.

children, Christmas is a day of gladness, let us be merry and wise. Antoine, thy bouillon has a marvelous good smell. Let us eat."

The great kettle was set on the table and the company gathered round, each one filled his gourd with the steaming, savory mixture; vension, wild turkey, dried green corn and lima beans—all cooked together—good Christmas cheer.

When the meal was finished, the fire heaped with logs and pipes were lit, the good Father was the soul of merriment. He sang the old Breton chansons in a clear, sweet tenor, that brought the vineyards and the sunshine to some of them, and, somehow, told of home to them all.

He held the company spellbound, savages and all, as he might have held a much grander company in his own, far away, sunny France, over snowy damask with the best blood of the vineyards at his elbow—but his life-work was here.

A Christmas Story.

When it came time for him to go, he sang for them a last song, the strong, old voice rising with the theme, until it closed grandly:

“Noel, Noel, voici le Redempteur.”

Each heart was softened, each one felt some of the thrill of the Christmas message.

The pony was hitched, the Father tucked in his furs, when an Indian solemnly brought the half-breed, preparing to bind him, when the Father turned and said: “No, no, John, take his knife lest he be tempted; it is too cold to bind him.” The Indian took the knife with a wondering glance at the priest and a scowl at the half-breed, let him step in the sleigh, wrap himself in a deer skin, and with an “Au revoir, my children,” the impatient little pony was off and away.

The company were quite subdued for

A Christmas Story.

some time after the good Father was gone, until Antoine started a French drinking song, and "den de fire was in de mash," as one of the Frenchmen said.

By common consent every weapon was left in the half-breed's cabin and an Indian left to guard it—a volunteer, the same one who had guarded the half-breed, then the brandy-keg was broached in the large cabin.

The sentinel brooded over the fire for some time; at last he rose, barricaded the door and went out through the smoke-hole in the roof. He listened for a few moments at the door of the large cabin to a sound of furious revelry, nodded his head and then took the trail of the Father's sleigh. His sturdy trot ate up the miles and he was soon beyond Turtle Island, when the moon rose. Scanning the snow ahead of him, he muttered to himself as he saw a dark object on the snow: "He had noder knife." Going cautiously up to it, he stopped a moment, felt the icy brow,

A Christmas Story.

tightened his belt, and with a set face started on the trail of the half-breed.

He horrified the good Fathers at the Mission with his story and the reeking scalp of the murderer.

The good Father Placide lay on the snow with a dull, red stain beside him. The poor mutilated hand clasping the crucifix; his face, serene and placid, turned toward the star that shone on the morning of the nativity of the Master he had served so well. On his face, written so plainly that the savage had seen it there and marveled: "Peace On Earth, to Men Good Will."



De Ol Time Christmas.

DE ol time Christmas is gone, an she ain't comin some more for de Frenchman. In de firs place, mushrat skin is cheap an whiskee is high, an dat is bad; but dat ain't all of it. De tree is gone, an de deer, an de coon, an de wil turkey, an de possom gone wid em—an livin is hard; an if it ain't dat we have wat you call de "light heart," we tink, sometime, de good God forget us.

Whiskee is good for a Frenchman, cos if she don bring back dose ting, she bring de good half-hour, wen a man don care a dam.

I kin riccolay wen dey was a little kag

De Ol Time Christmas.

in ev'ry shanty on de Pointe, an it come from Canada, cross de water in a feesh-boat an did'n pay no duty.

In de ol time, wen it come along to Christmas, you kin jes tek down de ol rifle from de peg an mek a hunt, an you kin bring in a pig—dey was runnin wil in de wood—or a fat buck or a turkey, to mek Christmas wid, an was all “bon camerade” den; me an ol Joe Chevalier an Antoine La Course an de Navarre boys an more — more — mos all under de leaves, long ago. Tit verre? Yes, merci.

De mos big Christmas I kin riccolay was in forty-one. Dat year, ol man Bon-vouloir's birse-day an Christmas was all on de same day, an so we have a “fete de granpere” an Christmas togedder.

De ol man say to me: “You come early an bring you fiddle an dat lil Sidonie Peltier, cos we goin hav hell of a time.” He has got ninety-four year, den, de ol

De Ol Time Christmas.

man, an jes biggin to lern good English, but he show his year some.

Say, dat was de time—ev'rybody come—an we had venison—honly de saddle, too—an wil turkey, an roas wil duck, an coon, an some rat. Say, if you buy dat dinner, now, in town, you have to mortgage ev'ry house on de Pointe. An den ol man Bonvouloir he mek some ponch, dat he lern how at Detroit, from de English officer dere, before de Injun war. An I take a few tit verre, an I know den why dey call it dat, cos I ponch de head off'n Gabe Reno, wen he mek himself fresh wid Sidonie. Ol Dan Navarre was dere—you know him? Yes—he is fine ol man an he is welcome at any shanty on de Pointe any time. De children love him, an dat not bad sign. He can bring de ol time back wid his chanson. He was young Dan, den, an he can sing lak a robin. I remember he sing "Frite a l'huile," she go lak dis:

De Ol Time Christmas.

“Mon pere a fait batir maison
Ha, ha, ha, frite a l’huile.
Sont trois charpentiers qui la font,
Fritaine, friton, fritou, poilon,
Ha, ha, ha, frite a l’huile,
Frite au beurre a’ l’ oignon.”

Eh, Sidonie, de ol man can sing yet.
An he sing, too:

“La Jeune Sophie,
Chantait l’autre jour,
Son echo lui repete.
Que non pas d’amour,
N’est pas de bon jour.”

Ah, dat was de bes time; de ol time,
an noding bring it back lak de ol chan-
son. Eh—you kin strike me dead if de ol
woman ain’t cryin—dat’s cos she riccolay,
an dose ting she forget jomp back quick.

Dat night, goin home over de crus, I

De Ol Time Christmas.

hask Sidonie to get marry wid me, an she tell me my head is full of ponch, lak Gabe, but de kind I had was de mos pleasant. Yes, dat ol woman Sidonie, an I nevaire mek no mistek—she is gettin long in year, now, but she kin brek up some wood yet.

Yes—seven boy an two girl; two of dose boy is layin where dey fell in de big Wilderness fight—some here, some dere—some marry, some dead—I lose track of dem, but Sidonie know.

I kin riccolay dem bes in de ol Christmas time, wen Sidonie use mek dem lil doll babie from mushrat fur an twine; an me, I use mek dem bow an arrow an tommie-hawk. Yes, de ol time, she gone—she is gone out like a pipe. You see dat big light in de sky in de souwes?—dat de city. I bin watch dat light grow for fifty year—did'n bodder me at firs, but now it hurt my eye. I got to look nord over de lac an see de star to res me. Dat look jes de same out dere it did fifty year go—

De Ol Time Christmas.

but I can't see de ol time Christmas comin
back—no.





Undine.

THE laugh that comes from brooklets
in their race,
Where daisies sweet are mirrored in the
stream,
The smile that dimples on the brooklets
face

U n d i n e .

Are but the laugh and smile of sweet
Undine.

And then the pretty brooklet opens its
arms

To clasp its meadows, royal with their
clover,

As Undine, radiant with her dainty charms,
Entwined her dimpled arms about her
lover.

And then, it gently steals 'neath alder's
shade,

With water lilies on its bosom sleeping,
Then, with soft cheek upon its pebbles laid,
It murmurs soft and low—'tis Undine
weeping.



The Blessing of Civilization.

I WAN to tank God for someting
Dat de town can't tek away,
De Spring an de Fall,
An de plovers' call,
An de sunrise over de bay.

If dey could tie up de sunrise,
An show her wen dey please,

The Blessing of Civilization.

A man wid fur collar
Would charge you a dollar,
An a quarter more for de trees.

My fader had dam good title
To de farm what he tought he hown,
But dey called him a squatter,
An lef him de water—
Took de meat, an we got de bone.

We got some mighty good water,
An dey couldn't steal de sun,
An so, now, to-day
We can raise mash hay,
An she sell for dollar a ton.

But dey can't buy de twilight,
Nor de green on de mash in de Spring,
Nor de kiss of de bee
To de fleur-de-lis,
An so dey have left someting.

The Blessing of Civilization.

De town owes more to de Frenchman
Dan de Frenchman owes to de town.
If I could tell,
What I know so well,
I would call some people down.

Dey got deir pretty houses
An deir dam electricy cars,
If dey tink a minute
Dey wouldn't be in it,
Except for ol Pete Navarre.

Ol Pete was here wen dose Injun
Was tick as de hair on de cow,
An he an his gun
An Harrison,
Mek de smoke in de chimney now.



Ole Mr. Tu'key Buzza'd.

OLE Mr. Tu'key Buzza'd was done settin on a rail fence one day, jes a kinder lookin round, patient like; kinder samplin de wind as it was a passin by, to see if dinner was ready. His head was sunk down mongst his shoulders, an his feathers ruffled up, like he didn't begrudge de time waitin, when long came Mr. Sparrow Hawk an sot long side er him on de fence—peart an sassy as a house nigga.

"Mo'nin, Mr. Tu'key Buzza'd," he sez,

Ole Mr. Tu'key Buzza'd.

sez he. "How is you dis mo'nin?" an den he kinder gibble-gabble some bout de news in ginerol, an at las he up an sez, sez he: "How does you git you libben, Mr. Tu'key Buzza'd?" sez he.

"Why, Mr. Sparrow Hawk," sez he, "I git my libbin a waitin on de Lawd."

"'Pears to me dat's kinder ha'd pickin," Mr. Sparrow Hawk sez.

"It might be wus," ole Tu'key Buzza'd sez. "I ain't a complainin, but since we is exchangin views, how does you git you libbin, Mr. Sparrow Hawk?"

"Me? Why, I go out an hustle fer my libbin," Mr. Sparrow Hawk sez, a kinder swellin up.

An jes den a chippie-bird done come an light on de fence ercross de road. "Now, you see dat chippie-bird?" Mr. Sparrow Hawk sez. "I done gwine to show you how a genl'man dines," and wid dat he done make a dive fer de chippie, an de chippie fly down towa'd de groun, an de Sparrow





Ole Mr. Tu'key Buzza'd.

Hawk he try to dive tween de rails, an bif, he strike hes head on de rail, an fall down dade.

Ole Mr. Tu'key Buzza'd he kinder on-loosen hisself, an jumps down an hop ercross de road wid slowness an dignitude, sayin to hisself: "'Pears to me dis yer waitin on de Lawd ain't so bad;" an den as he squar hisself like, a gittin ready fer a light lunch, he sez: "De late Mr. Sparrow Hawk he done right after all; he sez he gwine ter show how a genl'man dines; yassir, he done right," and wid dat he done toke Mr. Sparrow Hawk right in hes midst.

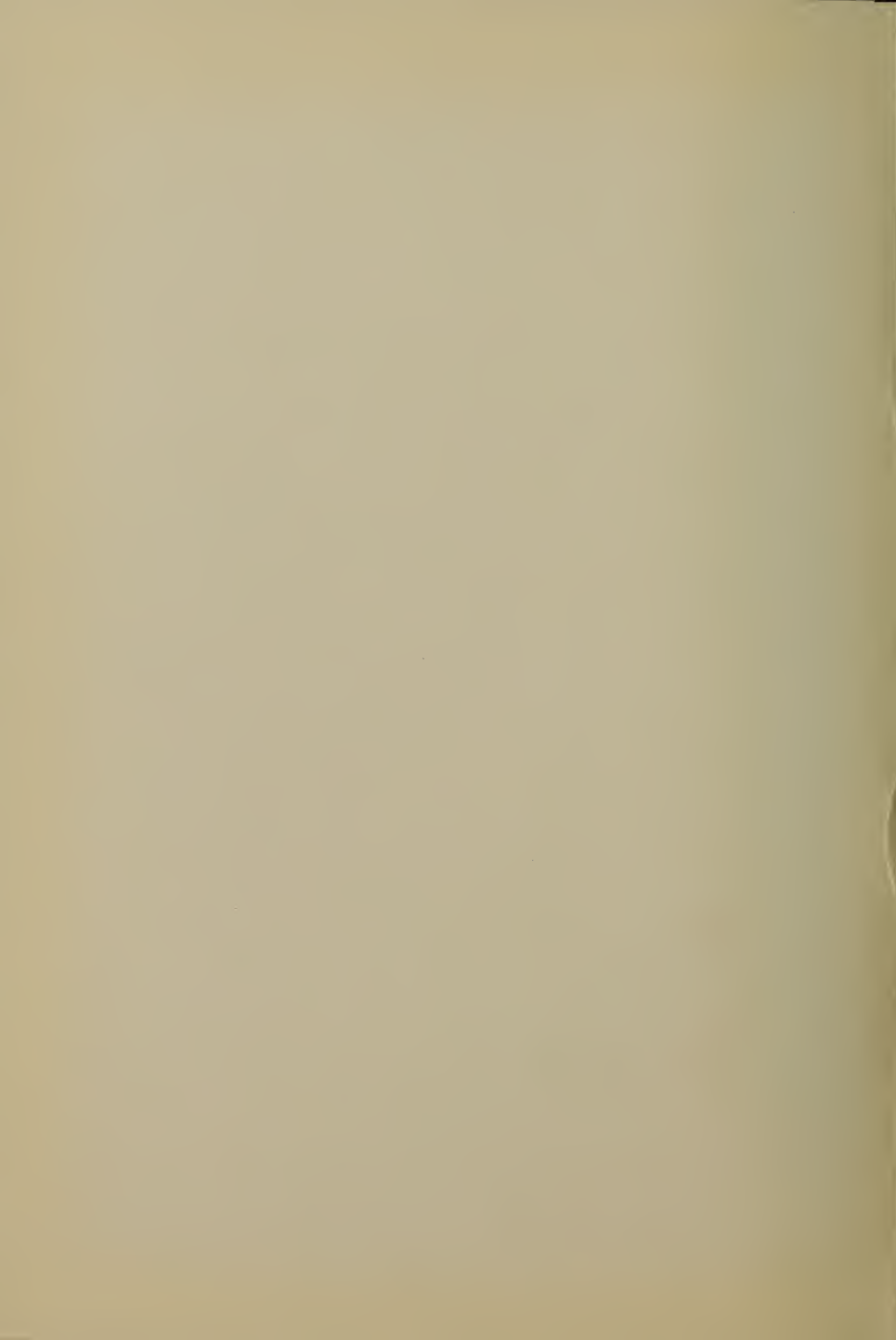




Antoine an Hes "Pon Boat."

NOT since long time ago, I am at Monroe wid a load of feesh an I meet on de street de priest, jes wen I am goin get a lil drink, cos I have de money for my feesh an she is biggin to burn. He say to me: "Antoine, de good Fader Mathieu is here from Quebec, an he is goin at Vienna—you shall tek him in you pon boat wen you go back, eh?" An I say: "Yes, mon Pere, I jes goin down an pay Isadore forty cent for some hegg I get las summer."





Antoine an Hes "Pon Boat."

An he say: "Don forget an fill you neck up." An I say: "Non, non, dat is not possibl'."

Dat was so bout dose hegg. I owe Isadore all right, but I tink I pay him nex time. I get me, mebbe, two or four good drink, an a quart for de priest, cos de win is blow sharp an cold.

I go back an get him, an we start out. She is blow pretty fresh outside, an me, I am feelin pretty good, an when a good puff come I hol her right on her course, an her lee rail is under all de time. Dat priest, I hav him on de winward rail, an she is good ballas, she weigh bout two hungred. De good Fader, he is get a lil scare at firs, but I hask him tek lil smile, an he tek big laugh, an I'm glad den I get a quart. I don't know wen I hav such good time lak dat. We sing, an bagosh, if I ain't know de song he sing, me, I sing any way, an she come out all right.

Bout sundown we get hom, an I hask

Antoine an Hes "Pon Boat."

de good Fader, will he com to my house an hav "petit souper?" an he say yes, an I am glad, cos Angelique she can't say noding bout de whiskee, cos de priest is wid me, an bot our hair is pullin lil bit. We are bot hungrie, like black bass, an bagosh, Angelique, she have catfeesh cheek, an we heat an heat. Den I mix up lil hot water an whiskee, an we hav "toddie" an good smoke, an me an de good Fader is "bon camerade," an den he stay hall night; but jes lil fore we go to bed, an wen Angelique is say her prayer, he say to me, an hes face is long, long: "Antoine, wat day is dat?" An I say: "Dat's Friday, mon pere," an I am get scare. An he say: "Wat kin meat we hav for supper?" An den I laf, I can't help, an I say: "Dat ain't no meat, dat's catfeesh cheek." An he laf, an say: "She is might good cheek; I tought you try to fool de good Fader. I tink, Antoine, you are 'bon Catholique'." An I say: "Sure, yes."

An den she say: "Good night."



Dat Blizzard.

I'M on de mash, now, forty year,
Cept one year in de Pen;
But de win, she's blow on Monday
Lak I nevaire seen since when.

Ol Pete Arquette got eighty year,
He say he seen some bigger

Dat Blizzard.

On Lac St. Pierre, near Montreal,
But dat ain't cut no figger.

Cos dat ol Pete's a liar, sure,
An wen he go below,
He say: "She is more hot lak dis
Some time at Toledo."

Dat water high lak eighteen feet,
My ol pon boat is sink,
My twine, she's hall bus up an torn;
I tink I tek a drink.

A good Frenchman drink whiskey
Wen de water is too high,
An wen she's low, he drink some, too;
She be higher bime-by.



Wen de Ole Houn Bays.

OH, de stars is jes a crinklin,
But de moon is in de dark,
De sly ole coon's a runnin,
So you lissen, an you hark,
Wen de ole houn bays.

De pups is runnin rabbits,
Caus a pup ain't got no sense;

Wen de Ole Houn Bays.

Ole coon is jes a laffin,
Caus de show ain't done commence
Till de ole houn bays.

Dar's a hummin in de tree tops
An a ripplin in de run,
An it only lacks de music
Dat's pretty nigh begun
Wen de ole houn bays.

Oh, glory! did you hear it?
Oh, Massa, hear it ring!
It's as meller as de Autumn
An it's welcome as de Spring,
Wen de ole houn bays.

Dey ain't no music like it
Fer dese ole ears o' mine,
It tingles in de fingers
An it warms de heart like wine
Wen de ole houn bays.



Wen de Ole Houn Bays.

De yaller gals' low laffin,
Wen de moon is in de full,
Is pretty nigh to music,
But to feel de heart-strings pull,
Hear de ole houn bay.





Society Sketch, Presque Isle, 1830.

THE social code at Presque Isle, on Maumee Bay in the '30s, was not rigid, and yet it had its limitations, so that when Jean Baptiste Beausoir brought from Frenchtown (now Monroe), a black-eyed French girl as an understudy to the then existing Madame Beausoir, the heart of the Madame was bitter, though the settlement

Society Sketch, Presque Isle, 1830.

merely raised its eyebrows (metaphorically) and then went on about its business. The Madame was French (the jest is an old one, but apropos) by Indian consent. She was the daughter of a chief's sister, the Indians reckoned descent only in the female line, as it created less misunderstanding, muffled the tongue of slander, and, was, in fact, a certainty, as far as it went. Madame was at work in the potato patch, as became a thrifty wife, when her husband swaggered toward the cabin with his recent acquisition, in the morning, having attended a ball at Frenchtown the evening previous. He had captivated the "willing maid" there by an alluring tenor voice, a trifle alcoholic, perhaps, an unusual and nimble dexterity in the dance and a fierce moustache "a la militaire." Madame, among the potatoes, took in this social inconsistency at a glance, but with the stolidity inherited from her mother, she merely glanced at the couple and then

Society Sketch, Presque Isle, 1830.

resumed her work, but with a fierce gleam in her dark eyes at her offending lesser half, who was not slow to interpret. He, therefore, wisely absented himself, not caring to be between the opposing factions and thinking the storm would blow over by the time he returned; then, too, he felt that he needed a mild stimulant for a "song" at the store, so he went forth with the spirit of a minstrel of old, with an old cracked guitar and a somewhat husky voice. We will leave him to absorb courage, and return to Madame. She waited until her husband had arrived at the thriving town of Manhattan and then threw off her stolidity. The French blood was dominant now. She got a lunch together, and pointing to a canoe on the beach, she said to her understudy: "You git in dose pirogue." The girl obeyed, partly through fear, as she could see the Madame was in a state of mind that would not admit of argument, and partly because she was somewhat

Society Sketch, Presque Isle, 1830

weary of her late experiment and the complication of her position. The Madame handed her understudy a paddle and headed for Frenchtown. Then followed the long, silent journey, until Madame unloaded her precious cargo, cleared, and started up the River Raisin to await developments.

Madame had a mathematical brain. Developments came as she had expected. Jean Francois came back to his cabin and saw that his "light o' love" had fled. He missed the canoe and decided that she had become lonely without him and "gone home to Mamma." He was partially right, but somehow he left Madame out of the calculation.

With the ardor born of several liberal potations of proof spirit and confidence begotten of a large bottle of liquid delight, he started for Frenchtown with a lusty stroke. It would be difficult to say whether Madame or Jean Francois made the quicker trip. She was prompted by bitter hate; he

Society Sketch, Presque Isle, 1830.

wafted on the wings of love and proof spirit. When he turned into the River Raisin, with the broad moon at his back, his canoe was fairly flying. Up the dark river he went singing his merriest "chanson," when suddenly, in an unusually dark place, he tumbled back in his canoe and felt as if a red-hot iron had been passed across his throat, stunned and helpless.

Madame, with nice calculation, had stretched a thong of raw buckskin across the river, so it would catch him just under the chin, which it did. By this ingenious device Madame had enjoyed a quiet "beauty sleep." She quickly and deftly bound his hands as he lay limp in the bottom of the canoe, put his legs under a thwart and then saw the bottle. Instead of smashing it she transferred about half a pint of it quietly to her system, and with a grunt of satisfaction she started for home, have done quite a thriving passenger business.

Society Sketch, Presque Isle, 1830.

After her recreant lord had exhausted his vocabulary of volcanic French oaths, and came to the stage where he asked penitently for a drink, the heart of Madame was softened. She unbound him and gave him a liberal mouthful, retaining, however, the custody of the bottle. When they arrived home the domestic atmosphere was quite changed. Jean Francoise was quite tender, if a trifle maudlin, in his promise to reform. Madame was reserved and dignified, yet inclined to the side of forgiveness, so they slept the sleep of the just—but intoxicated.



At La Plaisance.

THE yacht had swung round to her anchorage in the Bay of La Plaisance, perhaps half a mile from shore. A gentle wind was blowing from the south, and the

At La Plaisance.

cat-tails in the marsh a mile away nodded in obeisance to the breeze. On the water a broad splash of color from the moon stretched away like a path of gold across the bay, while toward the mainland fire-flies danced and glittered, and a whip-poor-will had just begun his nocturne, which came over the water with all its plaintive sweetness. Two young men were silently enjoying the quiet and a smoke in the cockpit, when one of them spoke up: "Dave, let's go over and see old Mose."

"All right; you want to see Julie, though," was the happy response.

"Nonsense, get the oars out," and soon the little boat grated on the sandy beach. A low shanty, built of drift wood, only forty or fifty feet from the shore, and there was Mose, seated before the door with Julie on a stool at his feet.

"Old Mose" was not old by any means; perhaps forty-five, full beard, with a dash of gray, finely shaped hands, that hinted

At La Plaisance.

that a remote ancestor had signed his name with a "De" before it, quite likely a French officer at Detroit in the old time.

Profanity was a legitimate part of speech with Mose. It bubbled from him innocently and spontaneously, although he was a devout Catholic.

But Julie, pretty little Julie, and yet not only pretty—there was something about her that, had she walked the streets of Paris in Revolutionary times, in whatever dress, there would have been a cry "aristocrat." As George and Dave came up from the beach, Mose got up quickly and outstretching his hands, exclaimed: "Well, M'sieu George an M'sieu Dave, I did'n tink I see you to-night. I see dat yacht out dere an I see her fold up her wing like dat gull wen she sit on dat lac, but I did'n tink you care for de ol man. Dat's my daughter Julie (as George looked at her admiringly); M'sieu Dave, he seen her before. Julie, get some chair."

At La Plaisance.

"No, Mose, we'll lie on the grass. Came over to have you tell us a story, Mose," George said.

"You wan a story, eh?" Then, with a smile and a glance at his daughter, he continued: "Well, I tell you a story bout dat lil Julie."

"Don't make yourself so fresh, Pa," cried the maid.

"See, look," said Mose, proudly. "Did'n I say long time ago dat lil Julie can lern English quick? She goin to school ovaire dere at Vienna, an (very earnestly) look—dat lil Julie goin to marry dat school teachaire. I tell you dat lil Julie she lern fas.

"Well, I tell you dat story. Come here, m' petite," to Julie, who came and sat by his knee. "M'sieu George, you see dose lil wave comin upon dat beach jes lak dat bay was always 'La Plaisance,' jes lak dat cat wen she eat milk—lap—lap—dat win jes bout mek dose cat-tail in de mash

At La Plaisance

bend lak dat (waving his hand), but me an Julie we see dose wave come in here lak dey was hungaire.

“Jes bout fourteen year ago, my wife an Julie, an her lil sistaire—Julie, she had four year, dat lil Maggie, she had two year—we was comin from Stony Point. We was comin, M’sieu George, but we did’n all come.” Then, almost fiercely, “my wife an dat lil Maggie out on dat bay, now.”

Julie had crept nearer him and clasped his hand, which trembled in hers, as she entreated: “Don’t tell the story now, Papa.”

“Oui, m’ petite, I goin tell her. Dat M’sieu George wan a story.”

His hand shook as he took it up ostensibly to take his pipe from his mouth, but really to wipe away a tear that had trickled down his swarthy cheek. “No, M’sieu George, dey call dat ‘La Plaisance,’ I call dat bay ‘Maiheur.’ Dose wave got all I ever had cep dat lil Julie. Sometimes wen Julie was lil girl we use to sit out here an



At La Plaisance.

dose wave come up on Bay Point. Wen she blow fresh dey sound far away, lak dat big organ in de church at Toledo, an Julie she say to me: 'Papa, dose waves sayin mass for Mamma and Maggie,' an I hope dat was so. But, M'sieu George, I get my livin off dat wave, but I don owe dat wave anyting, no. I tell you bout dat story. I come near forget. Fourteen year ago in November, I come from Stony Point. Dat win jes bout wes, mebbe; pretty near. She blow fresh an dat sea roll up high wen we start off, but I know dat ol pon boat she stan her if her stick hol. Wen we get jes bout four mile out from dat Monroe Pier, she blow like fury. I get two reef in her, but dat foremas she bend like dat grass in de mash. I tout she pull troo, but bime-by I get a puff dat take dat foremas lak dat—c-r-r-rack," motioning as he arose, and appealing asked: "What can a man do, M'sieur George, wid a pon boat wen de sea is big an she blow a gale an dat wreck

At La Plaisance.

draggin? She roll ovaire lak log an I see my wife an dat lil chile in her arm go down, but I ketch dat lil Julie. I tek her in my arm an get on de bottom of dat pon boat. I put lil Julie inside my coat an cut off piece dat main sheet an lash her fas. Den I pull up dat centaire board an lash her to brek dat sea, an so we wait for le bon Dieu to tek us, wen His time come, to Mamma an dat lil Maggie. We drif all night, an dat was a long night, M'sieu George. I grow ol in dat night. Bout four o'clock I seen schoonaire light bout five mile from West Sistaire. She pick us up an we been here evaire since. Dat ain't much for story, M'sieu George, but she is different from story—she is de trut. Me an Julie we come from Stony Point lots of time since den, an in dat Springtime wat you tink we do? Me an Julie we go in de wood an get dose wil flower, her Mamma use lak dat lil wil flower, and we get dat pon lily, too, an den wen we get jes bout

At La Plaisance.

four mile out from dat Monroe Pier (Julie, with her head in his lap, was sobbing), Julie, she sprinkle dat flower on de water an she say, 'Dat's for Mamma an Maggie.' Dat's de bes we can do, but me an Julie, we lak do dat. No, I don owe dat wave anyting cep for I get dat lil Julie, but she goin marry dat school teachaire, an den she forget her ol fader."

"Non, non, Papa," emphatically exclaimed the girl.

"Well," said Mose, as the young men arose to go, expressing their thanks for the story in a quiet and softened way, "Dat's all right, M'sieu George an M'sieu Dave;" then, musingly, as he walked down to the beach with them: "Yes, I tink sometimes, p'r'aps, mebbe, dat name 'La Plaisance' all right for dat bay—all dat I evaire love is out dere—cept Julie. Yes, I guess, p'r'aps, dat name all right.

"Bon jour, Messieu."



Not on the Bills.

A GLARE of lights, a long gallery extending around a large room, a large stage, waiters flitting hither and thither in white aprons, with a nimble dexterity born of much practice, which has earned them the flattering title of "beer jugglers."

The house full, the occupants in various stages. In the gallery, called by courtesy the "Ladies' Gallery," separate boxes in which "The Ladies," when not engaged on the stage, refreshed themselves with generous draughts of the amber nectar or coyly tossed off glasses of a more cheering liquid, variously referred to as "red eye," "booze," or "just a dash of the regular, Cholly," at the expense of young

Not on the Bills.

gentlemen (courtesy again) of rather callow appearance, some fairly good looking and evidently there for the first time.

Here and there down stairs, one whose face indicated that to him this tawdy tinsel was illusion—this painted mockery beautiful.

As one of these stared in open-mouth admiration, one of the initiated remarked: "Get on to de jay ketchin flies, Jimmie."

In fact, "Mesdames et Mademoiselles," a Variety Theater, about midnight. In one of the boxes, two young men and two persons who comprised part of the "Galaxy of Beauty," per programme. One of these persons was young and had a little of the freshness of youth, that showed through the paint and rouge. Dark hair and piquant black eyes, whose sparkle was not entirely dimmed, and a laugh that, in spite of its false ring, indicated that its owner had once been light hearted. The face, and rather musical broken English, indicated

Not on the Bills.

plainly that she was of Canadian-French origin.

She prattled gayly, much to the amusement of the young men and rather to the evident chagrin of the other work of art in abbreviated skirts. She was criticizing the work of one of her fellow artists (a portly sprite) on the stage, not very gently.

"Look at dat Liz, she is gettin bigger all de time, but I don care if she is how big—her feet is made for somebody bigger. Look! she is tryin mek a mash on dat lil man, but he ain't drunk enough. My God! if she fell on him off dat stage she mek her firs mash."

In the audience was a slender, wiry-looking fellow, who paid no attention to the show, but whose black eyes were wandering from box to box, with a look of the most intense scrutiny. One of the young men noticed him and said: "Julie, there is one of your kind of people."

Not on the Bills.

"Where?" she said, listlessly.

"There," he said, as the man looked squarely at the box.

The girl started, the sordid misery of her life rushed over her in a moment; with a look of anguish she said: "My God, I don't want to see him!" but it was too late, the man had seen her and started for the stairway.

In a few moments he came in with a bright look on his face. "How you do, Julie, I'm glad to find you; I look so long, I go all over this town; I come to ask you Julie if you go back with me." His face had changed as he saw the look of suffering on her face, and the last words he only stammered.

She answered, "No."

He said softly: "Julie, your mother would like to see you," then, dropping in the French, appealingly, as she began weeping: "Oh, little one, come with me, come back to thy old home; thy mother will kiss thee and

Not on the Bills.

ask nothing, and I will ask nothing but thee. Thou, whom I love, wilt thou not come and we shall be married? Thou has't loved me, thou wilt come?"

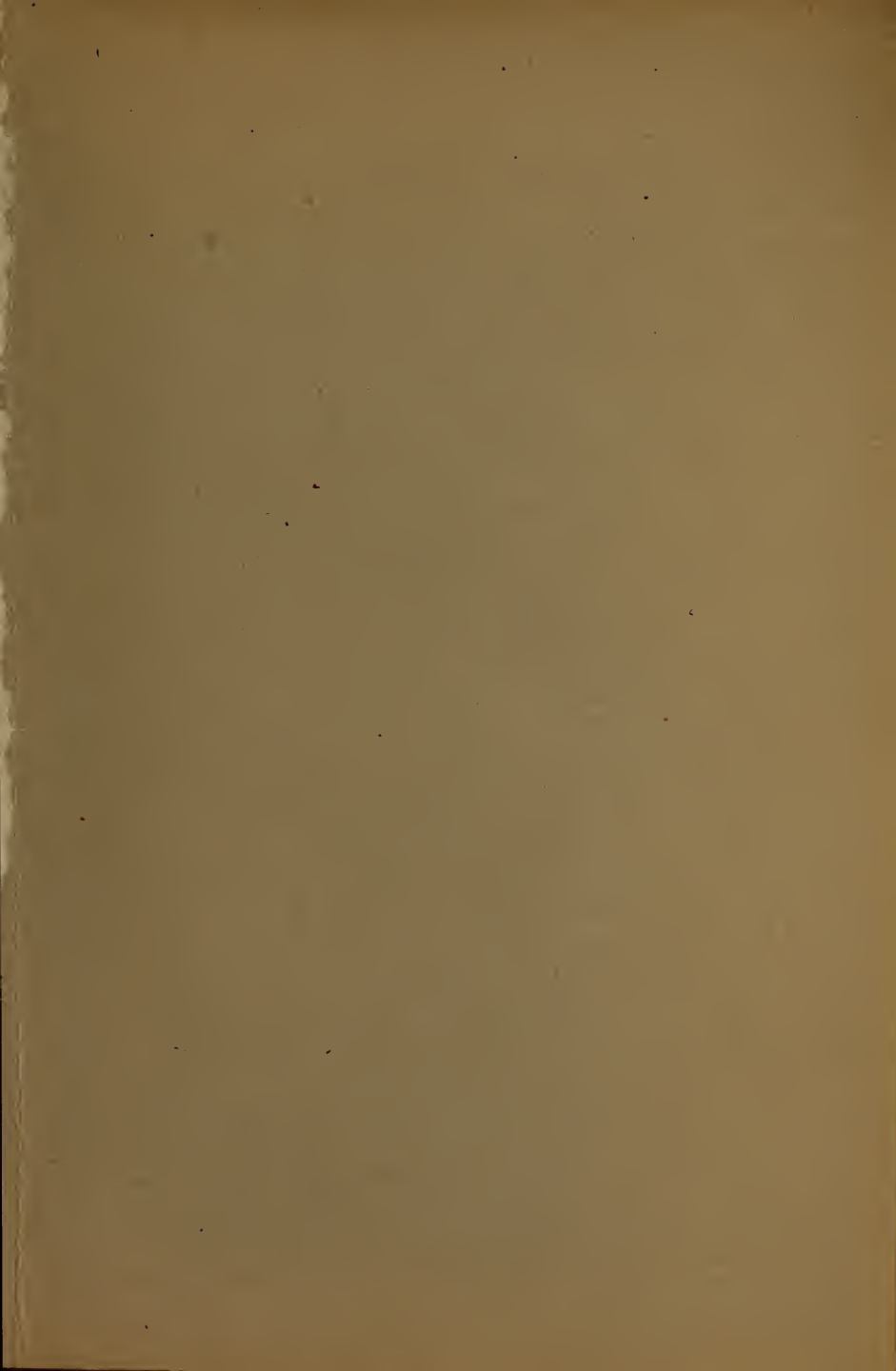
She had stopped crying, and arose as she said, hesitatingly: "No, Jacques, you mus go, I go an sing soon; you ought to be shem of me for to leave so, and—it is too late, I am marry already; tell my mudder good-bye." She was gone, and the man turned and went his way, crushed and broken.

There are little dramas not on the bills, sometimes, in all theaters.

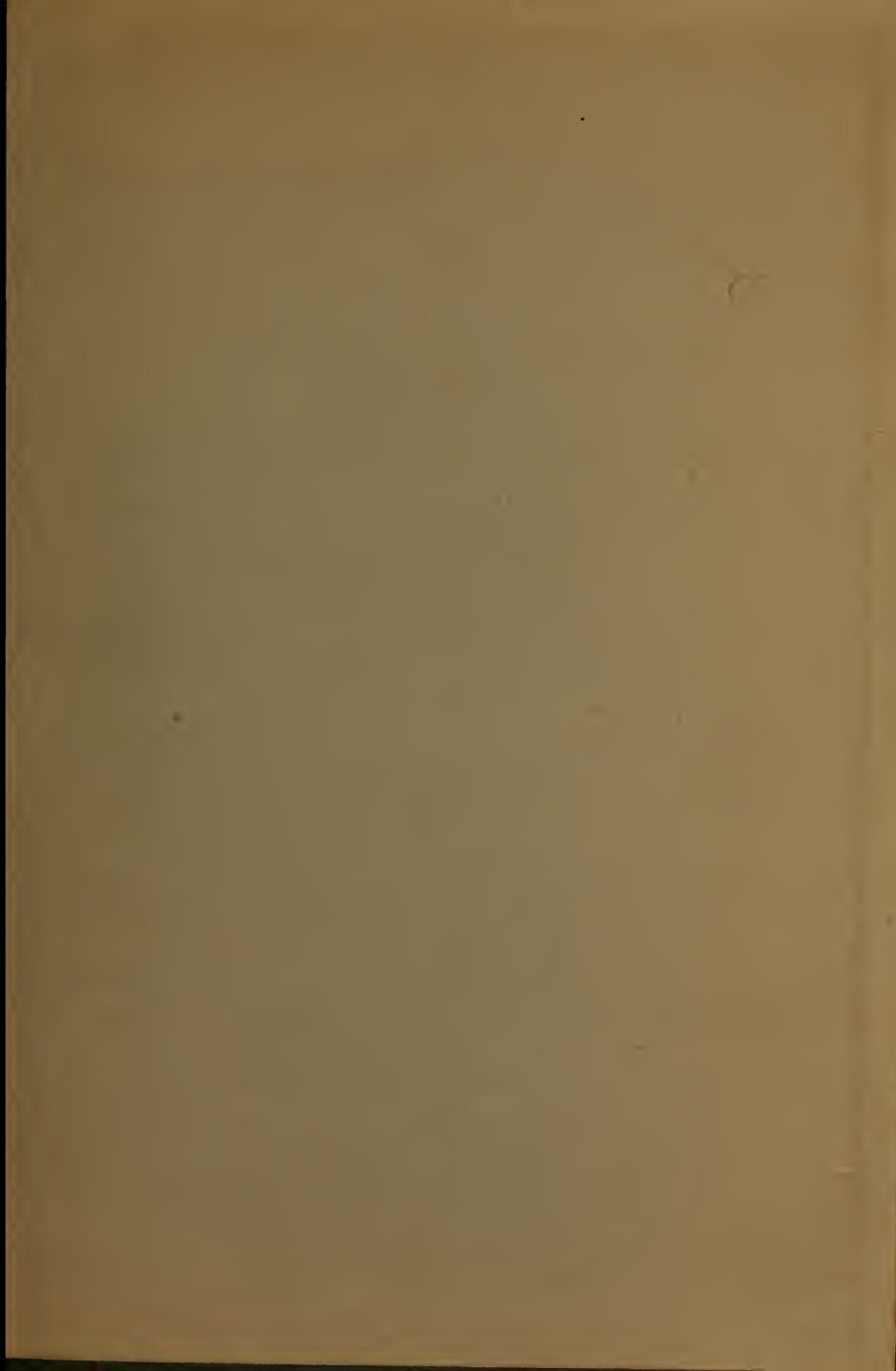


THERE'S a sonnet
In her bonnet,
And an idyl in her frock;
There's a roundeau on the clocking
Of her dainty little stocking;
In her hair, a pretty poem in each lock.
And when she laughs withall,
There's a charming madrigal;
But sweetest, best of all,
When she sighs,
There's a gentle benediction
In her eyes.





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